

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

## REVIEW OF THE *HERITAGE ACT 1977*

Hearing– 24 August 2021

### Answers to Supplementary Questions from Mr Adam Lindsay, Executive Director, SLM and SARA

#### Question 1

*Mr Adam Lindsay your submission mentions the State Archives and Records Authority of NSW (SARA) has a "vast collection of historical records and archives pre-dating European settlement of Australia in 1788."*

- (a) Are these records digitised?*
- (b) If these records are not digitised, do they need to be?*
- (c) And if so, do they need to be digitised within a certain timeframe to prevent them from perishing?*

The State Archives Collection is vast, containing 88 linear kilometres of physical records in many formats, dating back over 200 years. These records document the continuous administration of NSW and Australia's earliest forms of Government. There are some items in the Collection that date before 1788.

Digitisation increases accessibility and preservation of records. It is a process that involves substantial resources to prepare material for digitisation and to ensure its accessibility in digital form.

In that context and in the context of the vastness of the State Archives Collection, not all material can be digitised. NSW State Archives & Records is currently undertaking large volumes of digitisation and makes risk-based decisions to prioritise material to be digitised. Factors taken into consideration include the risk of the material becoming inaccessible (due to format fragility, degradation or obsolescence) and the likely level of demand for its access. A major factor in this decision-making is advice from professionally qualified conservators who have responsibility for the care of the Collection.

All material in the Collection degrades over time. This varies from format to format and the condition of each item. There is therefore no particular date by which material has to be digitised.

#### Question 2

*Your submission also mentions that "SLM recommends review of the Victorian Heritage Act 2017 Part 11 Heritage Fund to inform provision in the new NSW Heritage Act." What incentives does the Victorian Heritage Act 2017 Part 11 outline?*

The Victorian Heritage Act 2017 Part 11 sets out provision for the Heritage Council to establish a Heritage Fund 'to provide assistance generally for the conservation and management' of places and objects listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR).

The current Living Heritage Grants Program funded via the Heritage Fund incentivises owners of 'at risk' places and objects listed on the VHR to conserve and or protect Victoria's state significant heritage. These annual Programs can also be targeted to incentive and support the owners impacted from natural disasters, such as the 2019-20 Eastern Victorian bushfires.

### **Question 3**

*Also stated in your submission asks to "include provision in the in the Heritage Fund for SLM's Endangered Houses Fund to be eligible for Heritage Fund grants to be consistent with Commonwealth practice." Can you outline what the Commonwealth practise is for Heritage Fund grants?*

State Agencies, including Sydney Living Museums have not been eligible to apply for NSW State Heritage Grants. Whereas the Australian Government's flagship heritage program The Australian Heritage Grants program for places listed on the National Heritage List (NHL) is available to all owners and managers, including Commonwealth corporate entities and Australian State/Territory government agencies or bodies to apply for.

Sydney Living Museums has received Australian Heritage Grant funding for conservation and interpretation works at Hyde Park Barracks and the First Government House Site at the Museum of Sydney, which are listed on the NHL.